

Project Link

Brief Program Description

Project Link is a hospital-based program sponsored by Women and Infants Hospital of Providence, Rhode Island. A central feature of Project Link is clinical and case management services, individualized to the needs of enrolled clients, that focuses on substance abuse treatment, crisis intervention, and counseling. Project Link's mission is to integrate specialized substance abuse services into the maternal-child health system at Women and Infants Hospital.

Project Link is conceptually grounded in data from the Rhode Island Department of Health. The data demonstrated the high number of infants testing positive for illicit drugs, identifying the need for a substance abuse intervention targeted at pregnant and post-partum women.

A quasi-experimental longitudinal design with repeated measures (baseline, post-intervention, and follow-up measurements) was utilized to evaluate the effectiveness of Project Link. Targeted outcomes include alcohol, tobacco, and illegal drug use, employment, living status, and follow-up with referral services. In addition, there were targeted outcomes specified for infants, including birth weight, developmental milestones, and drug test results. Women were differentiated based on their point of admittance into the program. The treatment group was composed of pregnant women and the comparison group was composed of post-partum women.

Program Strategies

Project Link is a multi-component program designed to integrate specialized substance abuse treatment services into the existing maternal-child health system at Women and Infants Hospital of Rhode Island. The program targets risk and protective factors in multiple domains using two principal components: (1) clinical services, and (2) case management services. Clinical services includes the following: substance abuse assessment, crisis intervention, comprehensive psychosocial assessment, individual therapy, group therapy, child and family therapy, toxicology screening, and referral to ancillary services. Case management services includes the following: home visiting, parenting assessment, parenting education, monitoring of pediatric visits, HIV education, and GED/literacy tutoring.

Population Focus

Project Link served pregnant and postpartum women, with substance abuse problems that delivered at Women and Infants Hospital. Nearly 50% were white females, and 27% were African American. The majority of the women (88%) were over the age of 21. Most (85%) of the women were unemployed and over one-half had not completed high school. One-quarter of

the women were on probation or parole. The women identified cocaine as their major problem drug.

Suitable Settings

Project Link can be implemented in hospital-based settings. The women resided in an economically disadvantaged, urban community with high drug trafficking.

Required Resources

The following materials are available from Women and Infants Hospital:

- Evaluation instruments
- All forms associated with program implementation, from intake, consent, and assessment to discharge.

Implementation Timeline

Project Link provided significant staff training and supervision, particularly due to high staff turnover. All services were provided on an as needed basis, resulting from the needs of each individual client. Services provided include the following:

- Support services, such as individual counseling, case management, child and family therapy
- Home visits
- Addiction Treatment Services
- Parenting education (first- and second-level classes)
- HIV Education
- GED/Literacy tutoring
- Toxicology screenings

Outcomes

Evaluations of Project Link reveal that the program was successful in improving the birth outcomes of infants born to women who enroll in the program during pregnancy. Particular areas of success include the following for the treatment group:

- More prenatal visits
- Less pre-term deliveries
- Lower infant positive toxicology
- Lower discharge to foster care
- More cost efficient

Evaluation of Project Link data is being conducted by the National Perinatal Information Center (NPIC)

Process Evaluation data reveal that women were highly satisfied with Project Link. They noted the following: improved parenting practice, strong participation and availability during home visits, and increased use of services and follow-up with referrals.

Contact Information

For indepth information on this program, please use the contact listed below.

Program Developer

Patrick Sweeney, MD, Ph.D.,
Principal Investigator
Women and Infants Hospital
101 Dudley Street
Providence , RI 02905
Phone: (401) 453-7618
Fax: (401) 453-7692

Noreen G. Mattis, RN, M.Ed.
Project Director
Women and Infants Hospital